

Faust S. Dilley
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Chapter 4
Pocahontas Co.

CIVIL WAR PERIOD

(I'm giving this history of Travellers Repose because so much fighting or marching of soldiers took place in this section of Pocahontas)

About 150 years ago John Yeager came to the upper Greenbrier Valley from Pennsylvania near Lancaster. He settled on the East Fork of Greenbrier River at Travellers Repose. He took many thousands of acres in what was known as the German settlement. Among the neighbors were John Slaven, Abraham Burner, Moses Houchin, and Abraham Arbogast.

One of the sons of John Yeager, who married a Hull, was Andrew who married Elizabeth Dilley. Along in the 1820's Andrew came into the homestead, Travellers Repose. In 1861 he refugeed to Highland County, and the tavern house was burned by the Federal troops from Indiana regiments under General Milroy, camped on Shavers Cheat Mountain. The same year Andrew Yeager died of typhoid fever in Highland County. Peter D. Yeager, the son of Andrew, was a Confederate soldier. He spent a long time as a prisoner of war at Camp Chase, Ohio. Upon his return from prison he restored in a large measure the pioneer home and tavern.

About fifteen years ago Brown B. Beard, a great-great grandson of John Yeager the pioneer, added much in the way of improvements and modern conveniences to the restored house.

From earliest times Travellers Repose was a popular stopping place for the traveling public but it came into its own as a regular stage coach stop and tavern house upon the completion of the Staunton and Parkersburg Turnpike by Col. Claude Crozet late of Napoleon's armies, in the late 1830's and early 1840's. He was one of many Napoleon soldiers who refugeed to America after Waterloo, and was a master road builder. This turnpike was one of the heavily traveled thoroughfares from east to west: used by emigrants going west in their wagons; by statesmen and politicians from the west to and from Washington; citizens from

the northwest to and from Richmond. Travellers Repose was a regular stop, and ever a popular one, for its food and hospitality.

What an interesting thing the old tavern register would now be with its autographs of those who stopped there in stage coach days. But it is supposed the old book went up in flames when the house was burned during the war. Senator Henry Clay was a familiar figure in the neighborhood. He was a special friend of Col John Slaven whose plantation was where Durbin now stands, a few miles below Travellers Repose. The senator maintained a hunting camp in "The Narrows" between Durbin and the Tannery at Frank. Governor Joe Johnson and Stonewall Jackson also traveled the Staunton & Parkersburg Pike and often stopped over at the home of John Slaven to enjoy trout and venison. During the war, his home was also burned and the family's happy life came to an end.

Ambrose Bierce, the bitter writer, was a boy soldier with Milroy on Cheat Mountain. He writes of some of his experiences in this section during the war. Other writers familiar with Travellers Repose were Porter Crayon and Hargensheimer. It is the land of "Tol'able David" a one time popular moving picture.

The Confederate war camp, Bartown, was at Travelers Repose. One fall day in 1861 Milroy brought his army down from Shavers Cheat Mountain to fight an artillery duel with Camp Bartow, and then marched them back again. Old soldiers said this battle was a record so far as their experience of four years of real war went, in that more powder was burned for the number of men killed.

Two months later, General Milroy was repulsed with heavy losses when he attacked General Edward Jackson at Camp Allegheny. This battle was six miles from Travelers Repose but still on Yeager land.

General Averill passed through Travelers Repose with his army in his sweep down the Greenbrier Valley in the fall of 1863, to fight the Battle of Droop Mountain.

When the railroads put the stage coach out of business, for a generation the once well traveled east and west highway by Travelers Repose became a local road. Then came the railroad up the Greenbrier to cause industrial centers and towns to

develop near the old stage stop.

The Postoffice Department in 1856 wrote a letter of complaint to Jim Trotter, stage coach driver, over his delay in getting the mail across Cheat Mountain west of Travelers Repose. His terse reply was in these words: If the gable end of hell would blow out and rain fire and brimstone for forty days and forty nights it would not be sufficient to melt the snow drifts on Cheat Mountain.

Louise McNeill has written poems about this incident and about Travellers Repose. I quote them here merely to show how well she describes real incidents in her native Pocahontas. These of course could not be published without permission.

JED KANE

The Gauley mail was overdue
When Jed who was to drive it through
Cheat Mountain Pass to Staunton Run
Got special word from Washington
In which a postal clerk inquired
Why Mr. Kane who had been hired
To drive the course at post haste rate
Was not in yet, though three months late.

And now on a high-glaze marble wall
In the postal building Jed ^{the} Kanes scrawl
Hangs framed in silver: "Respected Sir,
You ask the reason and this be her-
If the gable end blew out of hell
Straight into the drifts of a snow that fell
Last fall on the ram's horn point of Cheat
It would take till Easter for brimstone heat.
To melt a horsepath, So I remain

Battle of Droop Mountain

History

By Della F. Yeager

This was a decisive battle in that it expelled the Confederates from that section of N. Va. and from there on to the end of the war.

Source -

Wonderful Scenic Views and Flashbacks
of American History by
Colonel William S. Waldron
U.S. Army